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A Study of Japanese-English Translation

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Essay: The Art of Translation

The Translator's Responsibility

It is often possible for a person to walk into a bookstore and pick up a novel which has been translated from another language, without ever realizing that the author whose name is listed on the cover of the book is not the person who composed the words they are reading. In such a case, the reader is likely to form opinions about the quality of the novel and the skill of the author of the original work based on the degree to which he or she can understand and identify with the language of the translation.

This reality places the translator of such a book in a position of dual responsibility: first, to the author of the source text; and second, to the audience for whom the translation is intended. If his or her rendition of the book in the target language (the language of the translation) is fluent and captures the imagination of the reader, then both the translator and the author of the original work gain prestige and readers gain access to literature they might not otherwise have understood.

If the translation is not meaningful to readers, then translator, author, and readers all suffer for it. If the author of the original text is not familiar with the language into which it is being translated, and cannot understand and comment on the translator's composition, then he or she is as much at the mercy of the translator's skill as readers who do not have access to the original work.

Many translators begin their work by learning as much as they can about the author of the source text, and if possible, talking to him or her about what impact he or she intended the original text to have on readers, in an attempt to build a strong foundation for their work. Analyzing the intended audience of the translation is also critical, because it can

determine the style of language in which the translation should be written to make it both interesting and comprehensible.

There exists no single strategy which, if followed, guarantees that a resulting translation will faithfully reflect the language of the original and the author's intended message, and will create images in the minds of its readers which are like those created in the minds of readers of the original work. From the perspective of some linguists, such a thing may even be impossible.

However, by remaining sensitive to author and audience, and being conscious of the sorts of general and language-specific problems he or she is likely to encounter, the conscientious translator is able to serve as a conduit through which people of wildly differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds can share knowledge and ideas.

Problems translators frequently encounter

The most common problems which befall translators can be divided broadly into two categories: problems related to the translator's abilities, and problems which develop during *retextualization* -- *the* re-writing of the text in the target language -- as a result of differences between the source and target language and culture.

Among the immediate and broad-ranging problems which arise in the first category, problems related to the translator, are obvious things such as insufficient familiarity with the cultures and languages involved.

Someone not familiar enough with both cultures to understand idioms, or the way in which certain words may have changed in meaning over time, is likely to make serious errors in judgment. Poor writing skill

in the language of the target text is another huge impediment to translating because a badly composed target text may neither engage the reader nor precisely convey the meaning intended by the author of the original work.

More narrow problems which befall translators vary depending on the type of material they are translating, but may include using overly technical words which the intended audience will have difficulty understanding, "dumbing down" the language of the translation unnecessarily, taking so much interest in the linguistic aspects of the original text that the resulting translation is flooded with footnotes and wordy explanations in the text of the nuances of the original work at the expense of readability.

Another pitfall for translators is choosing the wrong linguistic unit as the focus for translation. *Linguistic unit*, in this case, refers to words, sentences, paragraphs, or even whole texts; a translator must choose which of these units to base the translation upon: does he or she translate each word into the target language, read each sentence and then compose one in the target language which expresses the same meaning, or work on whole paragraphs at a time?

Translating word for word may may produce a stilted target text which cannot acceptably convey the meaning of the original; likewise, it is important to do more than summarize the original text in a translation, in order to preserve as much as possible of the author's own style.

Exactly what a translator will face when it comes to the second category of problems, those which stem from internal differences between the languages involved, is dependent upon the relationship between the source and target languages. Two categories of words which

frequently cause problems, no matter what languages are involved, are particles and verbs in set phrases. Particles are troublesome because they often exist as single words in one language and as a variety of words in the other language. The Japanese particle "ni," for example, may be translated into English as any of "in," "to," or "at." Set phrases are tricky because though each language may use a set phrase to describe the same act, verbs used in such parallel phrases may not have the same meanings in other contexts. For example, in English people take medicine and tests, whereas in Japanese they *drink* medicine and *receive* tests.

Because Japanese and English are so different, both grammatically and lexically, translators who specialize in these languages face a host of other language-specific challenges which may be impossible to overcome, or in some cases even recognize, without a very strong grasp of the cultural connotations of words in both languages.

The first major difficulty a translator familiar with these particular languages is likely to encounter when working with them is the fact that English grammar usually follows the pattern "subject-verb-object," while Japanese grammar is organized as "subject-object-verb." Because of this state of affairs, it is entirely possible that the words in a given Japanese sentence would most naturally appear in the opposite order in its English translation. For example, the sentence: 「(私は) 9時に学校へ行きました」, literally, "(I) 9 o'clock (at) school (to) went," would probably be translated into natural English as: "I went to school at nine 9 o'clock."

This grammatical reversal of sentence components is much more of a challenge for interpreters than it is for translators, of course, because while it forces both to internalize an entire sentence at once in order to produce its translation, interpreters must almost simultaneously

remember the sentence they have just heard, reorganize it, speak it in the grammar and vocabulary of the opposite language, and keep track of the other sentences which are being uttered during the time it takes them to do all this. Translators have the luxury of being able to take notes and look back over their work before anyone else sees it, to be sure that it is accurate.

Another obvious linguistic difference between Japanese and English include the character sets in which they are written. While English is transcribed using the Roman alphabet, Japanese uses four writing systems simultaneously: Kanji, Chinese characters borrowed into the Japanese language; Hiragana, an indigenous, phonetic syllabary character set; Katakana, a second indigenous phonetic syllabary character set which is used under different circumstances; and the Roman alphabet.

Any Japanese word can be expressed phonetically in the Hiragana or Katakana syllabaries, or in the Roman alphabet, but in common practice verb stems, adjective stems, and nouns are written in Kanji, particles and grammatical inflections are written in Hiragana, and "loan words" borrowed from English and other European languages are written in Katakana. English words sometimes appear in advertisements in Roman characters because they are eye-catching, and Japanese words are sometimes written in the Roman alphabet in Japanese texts designed to be read by foreigners who can understand some Japanese but haven't yet mastered the other non-roman character sets.

To a native speaker of English, the existence of a large number of lexical items in Japanese which have been borrowed from English and have clear English cognates, may make translating some passages from Japanese into English seem easier than it might otherwise be. In reality,

however, the meanings of these words are often slightly or even dramatically different from their equivalents in English -- a fact which even the editors of bilingual dictionaries may fail to take into account when defining these words in the English language.

Most of the other loan words still used in Japanese originally came from China, are written in Kanji characters, and may contain meanings which seem very abstract when viewed from the perspective of English, due to cultural differences. These words are often difficult to translate directly, requiring extra explanation which may give a translator pause.

The existence of implied sentence subjects in Japanese makes up another cultural difference between native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of English, and produces other unique challenges for the aspiring translator. While English grammar usually requires the subject of a sentence to be explicit, it is more elegant and natural in Japanese to omit the subject of a sentence whenever the author feels that it is possible to infer that subject based on context. The following is a particularly complicated illustration of this tendency:

行こうって言ったんだけれど、いやだと言ったもんだから、
怒っちゃって、帰ってきたのよ。[1]

Said 'let's go,' but because had said, 'No way!' got mad and came home.

Looking at this sentence in English, there is no way to know how many people are involved, which of them are responsible for which of the actions mentioned, or whether they are male or female.

There are actually several unspecified subjects in this sample sentence, arrayed like this: "A said 'let's go,' but because B had said 'no

[1] 英語通訳への道 (The Road to Interpreting English), p. 21

way,' C got mad, and (everybody) came home." Even with the knowledge that there are at least three subjects, we still don't know whether the person who spoke the sentence is A, B, C, or even an uninvolved party, which would determine whether the last part of the sentence should read in English "everybody came home" or "we all came home."

This custom of leaving it to the reader to keep track of who does what throughout a passage can also cause confusion when it comes to long strings of dialogue, particularly in Japanese novels. Speaker attributions (he said, she exclaimed, etc.) are often excluded from dialogue when the author feels that context makes it clear who is speaking, leaving the reader to work this out based on the way in which a particular line is said and its context. Statements such as "He said, nervously" do appear from time to time, of course, but with much less frequency than they do in English.

Traditionally, the Japanese language has been very stratified, with Japanese men speaking differently from women, children speaking differently from adults, and other relative social-status relationships and levels of intimacy being apparent from word choice and sentence structure. In most older Japanese literature, by knowing the natures of the characters who take part in a story and/or how they are related to one another, one could determine who spoke which lines without many explicit attributions. Likewise, the way one character addresses another character conveys a great deal of hidden information about their relationship in older texts.

These days, however, many Japanese people -- particularly young people -- are lowering their use in particular of gender-specific terms, which leads characters in modern novels to use similar language whatever

their genders and relationship. At times, this makes makes answering the question of who said what a challenge even for native Japanese speakers reading Japanese texts, let alone hapless translators.

One other area in which translators who are not very familiar with Japanese culture sometimes find themselves in trouble is in the interpretation of answers people give to yes or no questions. In English, when someone asks the question "Will you help me with my paper?" they might expect an answer equivalent to the words yes or no. In Japanese, however, one often receives a response which looks and sounds affirmative but may actually be negative, because in the social situation it is impossible for the respondent to say no outright.

According to social rules for polite behavior, the person who asked this question is expected to pay close attention to tone of voice and body language in interpreting this kind of answer as a yes or a no. This can be difficult for someone not very used to it to do in person, and it is sometimes even more difficult to pinpoint the genuine feelings of each party when the conversation is written down and there are few clues as to either party's tone of voice or body language.

Addressing all of these linguistic and cultural challenges can seem very daunting, but when a translator has access to the author of the original work or even unaffiliated native speakers of both languages who can confirm the cultural connotations and meaning of a given word or phrase, they are far from impossible to overcome.

The final test of a translation draft is, of course, to hand it to a native speaker of the target language who is not familiar with the source language or culture and pay close attention to see where they stumble or seem confused. Having such a person read passages out loud is often the

best way to discover when a word or phrase is unnatural or unclear in the target language.

Unless, of course, the translator subscribes to one of the schools of thought within the field of Linguistics which maintains that translations should not read smoothly in the target language, nor be semantically clear to its intended audience.

Linguistic Theory on the Subject of translation

Linguists, who may or may not work as translators themselves, have long been fascinated by the concept of listening to words in a given language, understanding them somehow, and then generating new words in an entirely different language which belongs to a culture which views the world in very different ways.

How do translators move ideas from one language into another in such a way that they remain comprehensible? According to the famed Whorfian hypothesis, which asserts that the language a person speaks determines his or her world view -- and that it is impossible to accurately express a concept to someone whose language contains no word for that concept -- such a thing can't be done at all.

The question of what goes on inside a good translator's head as he or she works is undoubtedly the most fundamental and mysterious part of the translation process. In Linguistic literature on this subject, the translator's mind is often referred to as a "black box," as though it were magical, like a magician's top hat. The source text goes into the black box, the translator somehow internalizes it, rearranging it to make something that makes sense in another language, and then the translation, called the

target text, comes popping out the other side. The very fact that it is so difficult to pinpoint how translators do what they do is the reason that they are still necessary in an age in which machines have replaced human beings in so many fields.

Translators used to be seen as walking bilingual dictionaries who simply used their expanded mental lexicons to substitute a word in one language for an analogous word in another language. It is now clear, however, that this view is very naive. In reality, as we have seen, a translator must be both bilingual and bicultural, understanding both the words of the source and target texts and the cultural context in which they are set. Translators walk a very fine line as they try to remain faithful to the author's words while simultaneously changing them in ways that engage a new audience and create the same emotional picture in the minds of the new audience as the source text inspired in its original readers.

While it is important that a translation reflect the style and detail of the original work insofar as this is possible, it is often even more important that it convey the meaning of the source text. Many translators have found that working to render each sentence or paragraph with the intent of preserving the meaning and tone of the original text can be much more effective than a more literal rendition of the same piece, even at the expense of the original wording. Translating each word simply does not leave sufficient freedom to allow a translator to weave images in the target language which are analogous to those created in the original text.

The degree to which it is appropriate to depart from the wording of the original text seems to vary, based on the genre of material that is being translated and the translator's own philosophy on the subject. Some

specialists have no qualms about changing even the images an author uses to create a mood or describe a scene, making drastic substitutions in an attempt to connect with a particular audience. Others view the taking of these kinds of liberties as heresy.

Lawrence Venuti, author of The Scandals of Translation, has gone so far as to denounce the practice of translation entirely. According to Venuti, "'The power of translation' is its ability 'to reconstitute and cheapen foreign texts, to trivialize and exclude foreign cultures, and thus potentially to figure in racial discrimination and ethnic violence, international political confrontations, terrorism and war.'"[2] Venuti believes that there is a danger that the necessary transformation involved in translation will be used for evil, promoting political agendas or personal ideologies at the expense of the original author's intended meaning.

Proponents of this view offer *resistive translation* as a solution to the dangers they view as inherent in the translation process. Resistive translation aims to combat perversion of an original work by emphasizing the differences between the language of the source text and the target language, deliberately attempting to create a translation which will not read fluidly, and could not be mistaken for a piece of writing which is native to the language into which it has been translated.

For people who view the field of translation in a more optimistic light, cynical opinions such as that held by Venuti serve to highlight what they see as the paradox of translation. Though it may be true that it is never possible to translate every nuance of a text precisely into another language, and that there is no one method translators can follow which

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[2] Translation as Text, p. 2

will ensure that their work is everything the author of an original text would like it to be, it is also clear that if something is lost in translation, something may also be gained.

Careful translation which takes into account the knowledge, thoughts, feelings, aims, intentions, needs and expectations of both author and readers throughout the translation process may bring enlightenment and understanding to people of different cultures, and for most translators this is what the art of translation is really all about.

Essay: My Translation Experience

My main goal throughout this project was to try to develop my own "black box," coming to understand how it is possible to use my own knowledge of English and Japanese, my cultural experience of both countries, and my experience with creative writing to transform a piece of literature from one language to another while preserving as much of the magic of the original work as possible. Choosing to translate a novel from Japanese into English for my Honors senior project also seemed like an elegant means of combining elements of both of my majors, Linguistics and Japanese, allowing me to put much of what I had studied as theories into practical use.

I chose to translate *N.P.* over other modern Japanese novels because Banana Yoshimoto's style of describing feelings and images was fascinating, and the prospect of trying to internalize these things and then creating something in English which could inspire a similar mood or similar mental images in an American audience seemed like a real challenge. I liked the fact that *N.P.* contained elements of mystery and taboo, which I hoped would pique the interest of American readers. The more interesting a story I could find to translate, the easier it would be to find acquaintances willing to read my rendition of it and provide me with feedback from the perspective of someone unfamiliar both with the original book and with Japanese culture.

The story of the novel *N.P.* is the story of another novel, also titled *N.P.*, which seems to have a kind of magical hold over everyone who attempts to read and translate it. Anyone who tries to translate this novel within a novel finds themselves drifting into a depression so deep it drives them to suicide. Resultant discussions of what effect translation has on the translator within the novel *N.P.* were yet another reason why I

was more intrigued by this book then by other pieces of Japanese literature I had read and considered working on.

My final reason for choosing *N.P.* is that it was a novel I knew had been translated before. At first, it seemed tempting to attempt a translation of something without an existing English version, but because my understanding of Japanese is still incomplete and it would be my first attempt at working through something as intensive as a 219 page novel, I felt that it might be more valuable to apprentice myself to the professional translation, using it as a sounding board for my own interpretation.

I would first translate the book entirely on my own, and then read the pre-existing version. By comparing my own translation to that of a professional, I hoped to identify some of my own strengths and weaknesses in the interest of improving my skills.

Work on this project actually began in earnest while I was studying at Tsuda College in Japan, where I took a course in translation and spent a good deal of my free time reading modern Japanese novels to get a feel for their structure. I also spent time studying television programs with subtitles or optional English dubbing to hear how words and phrases in Japanese were translated in this medium.

Once I had returned to the United States and gotten approval to begin work on the project, I developed the following six-phase plan of attack:

1. Read the book.
2. Read it again with an eye to characterization and the overall plot. How a particular character feels about the world would determine how they might speak in English, as would their relationships

with other characters. I also felt it was very important to have a clear handle on the overall plot before beginning to translate the novel so that I could more accurately interpret potentially ambiguous words, recognize foreshadowing, etc.

3. Work quickly through the book to create a rough translation, worrying more about getting everything I could into English than about its aesthetics (tone, fluidity, etc.) Words and phrases which are particularly problematic would be marked with footnotes referencing their location in the original text, or simply inserted into the text of the translation in the original Japanese for future analysis.
4. Return to the beginning of the translation and move through it step by step, taking greater liberties with the wording of the English in an attempt to inspire images in readers of the translation which are similar to those evoked by the Japanese. At this time, I would ask native speakers of Japanese to describe the meaning and cultural connotations of words and phrases or grammatical structures which had given me trouble.
5. Present a final draft of the translation to American readers who are not very familiar with Japanese language or culture, and receive feedback regarding which parts of the translation are unclear or unnatural. Editing for typographical errors and other mistakes pertaining to the conventions of written English would also take place at this time.
6. Read a professional translation of the same work to see how someone with more experience would have handled difficult passages, and to compare the degrees to which each of us took

liberties in adapting the text for an audience of a different culture.

When I began to put this plan into effect, I found that working through these phases did seem to be an effective means of organizing my time and keeping myself from leaping wildly away from Yoshimoto's original wording before I was absolutely sure that doing so would both preserve the intent of the passage and make it more accessible to readers.

On my first run through the text, I decided to translate passages whose meaning I was sure of beyond the shadow of a doubt into their natural English equivalents, using the sentence as my basic unit of translation. When I was not sure of the function of a certain sentence, or the meaning of a given metaphor, I translated it more or less literally into English, underlined it, and marked it with the page number of the corresponding passage in the original text. Words and phrases which I thought to be idiomatic, and felt uncomfortable rendering into English without clarification from a native speaker of Japanese, went into my translation in their Japanese form. These, too, I marked with the page number of the original passage.

My next step, still within the fourth phase of the process, was to consult Japanese friends as to the meanings of things I didn't fully understand. None of them had ever read *N.P.* in either language, and I was careful to present my questions to them in such a way that I could get a better understanding of the meanings of the words I was dealing with, without eliciting their own translations.

In the case of single words, this was easy. One such example is the word 魔物 (mamono), which is used several times to describe one of the

main characters in the book. I knew roughly what a *mamono* was, that it was some kind of monster or demon, but words such as *demon* or *devil*, which I had often seen used as translations of this word really didn't seem appropriate to the character in question. Finally, I asked a Japanese friend to describe a *mamono* to me. I wanted her to demonstrate to me what it was, or to explain it using Japanese, rather than giving me yet another English translation, the meaning of which I knew only in an English-language cultural context. Her answer was to raise her hackles, form her fingers into claws, and growl like a caricature of a menacing bear before grabbing at some invisible object and pretending to devour it. A *mamono* is a Japanese mythical creature who snatches up humans and eats them. In the end, I described this in a sentence rather than with a single word.

Sentences whose meaning was somewhat unclear to me, or which I could translate literally but which didn't make any sense in a literal form, often required a slightly different approach. Many of the sentences I had trouble with seemed coincidentally to be sentences in which Yoshimoto had used non-standard Japanese phrasing to evoke a particular feeling in the minds of her readers. To arrive at an English translation of these, I described what had been happening in the story up until the point that the sentence took place and then asked my advisors to read the paragraph which contained the sentence and describe to me their own mental image of what was happening. In some cases, I ended up departing from the original wording in order to achieve what I hoped was a similar effect in English.

I also found myself running up against a number of words for objects which are not commonly found in the United States, or concepts which

English doesn't frequently employ.

Words such as こたつ (kotatsu), おみやげ (omiyage), and 焼将場 (yakiba) fall into the first category. A *Kotatsu* is a low table, usually found in Japanese living rooms, which is covered by a blanket and heated in the winter. Family members often gather around it to eat and do their homework because it is so warm, making the kotatsu the center of family life. *Omiyage* is often translated into English as *souvenir*, but this word is unsatisfactory from a cultural standpoint. In Japan, it is someone's social responsibility to bring omiyage when visiting other people's houses or returning home from a trip. A *yakiba* is a crematorium, but unlike its American counterpart, in Japan family members go to the yakiba to attend the cremation of a loved one, and when it is finished, ceremonially pass his or her bones from person to person. All of these words required more than a single word translation to give an American reader an idea of their cultural meaning.

Even more difficult were words which describe concepts not present in English in the form of single words. 本人 (hon nin), for example, refers to the person who is directly concerned by whatever it is that the speaker and listener are discussing. 救われた (sukuwareta) literally means "to be saved by," but every time it came up in the text of *N.P.* this translation seemed very inappropriate. The speaker always seemed to mean something more akin to "what would I do without you," and I was forced to change the wording of some passages considerably in order to express this.

Just as guidebooks to Japanese-English translation warn, I was also troubled by the existence of ambiguous Japanese words which could be translated into English in a number of ways, depending on context. One such word appears repeatedly throughout the novel *N.P.* and is usually in a

position vital to revealing the nature of the plot— the word 好き (suki), which can mean either "like" or "love."

In *N.P.*, the female narrator of the story uses this word with regard to two other female characters on a number of occasions, and because the novel contains one overtly lesbian scene involving the narrator and another female character, both *like* and *love* seemed plausible translations for *suki*. I felt that the narrator was trying to imply that her feelings of affection toward her friend were romantic in nature without eliminating plausible deniability, but it was very difficult to think of an elegant way of accomplishing the same feat of subtlety in English. I finally decided to err on the side of conservatism and translated it in one place (page 35) as, "I felt that I could start to really like her, (and it was frightening)."

While words such as *suki* which have multiple potential interpretations provide localized challenges to a translator, the tendency of Japanese grammar to leave out information whenever it can be reasonably inferred from context is an even more pervasive source of potential ambiguity. Subjects of sentences frequently go unwritten, and dialogue is often not overtly attributed to a particular speaker.

In *N.P.*, the fact that the subjects of sentences were often only implied offered a unique challenge, because this kind of natural ambiguity played a large role in creating a feeling of suspense through several parts of the book. A character could refer to another person in such a way that no information as to gender or his or her relationship to the speaker was given away. Even though it was usually very plain to someone who had already read the book who the character in question was, maintaining the air of mystery that Yoshimoto created in Japanese while writing in English was difficult, because the English language lacks gender neutral

pronouns, and rarely offers the option of leaving out the subject of a sentence all together. In some cases I was able to use words such as "somebody" as the subject, but in many cases I was forced to use either "he" or "she," and betray the gender of the person in question where it remained hidden in the original.

The word その日 (sono hi) also proved problematic for similar reasons. *Sono hi* could be literally translated as *that day*, or *the day in question*, but because it often appeared at the very beginning of a new chapter I always felt that both of these sounded unnatural in English, and wished I could change them to *some time later*, *later that day*, or one *day*, to explain something of the temporal relationship between that section of the book and the parts of the story which had already been told. I was never sure what that relationship was, however.

The existence of this phrase made me wonder whether the whole book should be structured more like a series of diary entries, in which case each chapter could begin with, "Today..." and the story it contained could be told as though it had just happened and the narrator herself did not know what was to follow in the rest of the book; or whether it should be written as though the narrator were relating her experiences to someone else over coffee after the whole thing was over.

In the latter case, it seemed as though it would be more appropriate to give some idea of how much time had passed between chapters in the English rendition of this phrase, had I known myself. Throughout the translation process, I never was entirely sure of the best solution to this problem, so I tried to be vague whenever possible, in accordance with the original text.

Once I had eliminated all of the Japanese words from my translation,

and worked each passage into the smoothest English I could use without losing what I felt to be the character of Yoshimoto's original writing, I placed it in the hands of two native speakers of English, and waited anxiously for their feedback. I asked them to point out passages which seemed confusing or abrupt, as well as any grammatical or typographical errors I might have missed during my own revision process.

The comments I received from American readers were very interesting. In many cases, they pointed to the parts of the text which I had translated as best I could without being entirely sure what effect Yoshimoto had intended them to have, citing them as unclear. In other cases, they mentioned words which I had translated slightly too literally to sound natural in English. Many of these words had been borrowed from English, and sounded strange because I had tried to reverse-translate them into their original English form even though their usage was slightly different in Japanese and another word would have been more appropriate. I listened to my sample readers' suggestions and altered my translation draft wherever I felt I could improve it.

Finally, once I had saved my own work once and for all and declared my translation finished, I opened the professional translation I had found of the same book (translated by Ann Sherif) and began to work my way through it with a mixture of horror and fascination.

Comparing Sherif's translation to the original Japanese and my own interpretation revealed a number of places, beginning on the very first page, where I had inevitably misunderstood a word or phrase. I also discovered some instances where I was unable to reconcile the professional translation with the Japanese text, and, in the end, found myself left with the feeling that Sherif and I had come away from the

novel *N.P.* with completely different impressions of its mood.

There are so many words and passages in which I could read Sherif's translation, then the original Japanese, and understand how I had come to the wrong conclusion about their meaning that I'm not sure it would accomplish anything to go into them in detail here. Studying them is something I would like to work on in my own time, as part of my continuing study of Japanese, once this project is completed.

In my reading on translation theory, one thing I found experts saying over and over again is that a translator who has decided that she knows 'enough' of both languages to get by in her field, without continuously making every effort to explore and further her knowledge, is a failed translator. I have no illusions about my understanding of Japanese being anywhere near complete, and am glad of all of the insight this experience will have given me into certain nuances of the Japanese language.

Passages in which my rendition and Sherif's rendition differ in small ways -- the designation of who spoke certain lines in long strings of dialogue and the interpretation of the subject in a sentence in which that subject was not overt -- offer even more provocative food for thought. On page 29 of my translation, for example, Otohiko is talking to Kazami about making a copy of a translation of chapter 98, which she kept as a memento of her former boyfriend. I translated this sentence as:

"The 98th chapter. The one you kept as a memento of that guy."

Sherif wrote:

"The ninety-eighth story. The memento of Sarao Takase."

Story is undoubtedly a better choice of words than *chapter*, but Kazami kept the story in question to remind her of her boyfriend, Souji, and not of Otohiko's father, Sarao Takase; so, in the absence of any contrary evidence

existent in the original Japanese text, I am not convinced that the sentence's ambiguous pronoun does not refer to Souji, as I had imagined.

I've discovered a number of places like this, where I tentatively and humbly disagree with the professional translation, and look forward to rereading all three books, trying to uncover the truth about these passages.

The one thing that struck me most about reading another English version of *N.P.* was how wildly my image of each character, and the world in which the novel is set as a whole, differs from the world I found in the other translation. For me, a large part of the appeal of *N.P.* in Japanese was what I perceived as its dark beauty; Yoshimoto's way of painting images, sensations, the atmosphere of a scene or the aura of a character fascinated me, as did the idea of somehow expressing the same sensations in English.

Even though my imperfect understanding of Japanese prevented me from understanding every nuance of every word of the text, I felt secure in my internalization of the tone. The entire book, to me, seemed like an expression of the dark charisma that fascinated its narrator about the character Sui. To me, there was also something delicate about the original book that I didn't sense in Sherif's rendition of it, but sought to capture in my own.

On the whole, reading her translation was, for me, a little bit like watching a movie after reading the book. Perhaps, like the narrator in the story *N.P.*, I put more of myself into my translation of this book than I should have, and thereby violated the original in some way.

All things considered, I believe that this project has more than lived up to my expectations. It has allowed me to continue studying Japanese in

an intensive way, when I have exhausted all of the language classes available to me at Western; it has given me the chance to find out what it is like not only to translate, but to translate something as long and intricate as a novel; and it has provided me with enough of an understanding of translation to know that it is something I would like to pursue in the future, perhaps at the graduate level.

I am very grateful to the Honors program for the opportunity to design and carry through with a project which has held so much meaning for me.

Annotated Bibliography

The Art of Translation, Voices From the Field. ed. by Rosanna Warren. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1989.

This collection of essays written by working translators is not a manual designed to teach translation nor an explanation of the relationship between English and Japanese. It was useful, however, for the comments many translators included regarding the ethics of translating. Parker Po-Fei Huang's explanation of how to translate ideographic Chinese characters was also interesting to me in that these characters have similar meanings in the Japanese language, and provide challenges to the translator which are at times somewhat related.

The Craft of Translation. ed. by John and Rainer Shulte. London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Translators in a variety of fields working with a variety of languages offer insight to the aspiring translator through essays describing their own views on the translation process. The final essay, written by Edward Seidensticker beginning on page 142, addresses the linguistic and cultural differences which make Japanese-English translation difficult and discusses in some detail the current state of the field of translation between these two languages.

Interpreters Association of Japan. The Road to Interpreting English. Tokyo, Japan: Taishukan Shoten, 1976.

Written in Japanese for aspiring Japanese-to-English interpreters, this book is designed to aid potential interpreters in honing their language and interpreting skills. For the purpose of this study, it was useful because it contains specific references to lexical and grammatical differences between Japanese and English which require special attention by both interpreters and translators.

Massoud, Mary M.F. Translate to Communicate. Elgin, Illinois: David C. Cook Foundation, 1988.

Designed to teach prospective translators what it takes to make a successful and honest translation of a text, including explanations of the qualities most respected translators possess and the problems amateurs are likely to encounter. Contains no specific reference to problems encountered in Japanese-English translation.

Neubert, Albrecht and Gregory M. Shreve. Translation as Text. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992.

This guide for the aspiring translator takes a slightly more conservative view of

how a translation should be conducted and what liberties it is permissible for a translator to take in the interest of achieving a connection with the intended audience.

Newmark, Peter. Approaches to Translation. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1981.

Linguistics theories pertaining to the process of translation are outlined in this book, which discusses methods a translator can use to arrive at a faithful rendition of a given text in another language and hypotheses as to what goes on inside a translator's mind to convert expressions of meaning across languages.

On Translation. ed. by I.A. Richards. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1966.

The section "On Linguistics Aspects of Translation," by Roman Jakobsen, provides an interesting description of translation from a theoretic, linguistics standpoint.

Sofer, Morry. The Translator's Handbook. Rockville, Maryland: Schreiber Publishing, 1997.

This guide is a useful resource to people who already have some skill in translating and are interested in breaking into the field of translation as a career move. The book presents guidelines for the aspiring translator to help him or her determine to what kinds of texts he or she is most suited, what skill level he/she has reached as a translator, and how he/she should market himself/herself either as a freelance translator or as a potential employee of a company.

Yoshimoto, Banana. N.P. Trans. Ann Sherif. New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1990.

This professional translation of N.P. served as a reference in that it enabled me, once I had completely finished my own translation of the book, to see how someone with much more experience in the field would have handled difficult passages.